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The Weeping Stones

By Peter Penner

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BY

PETER PENNER

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In The Parlor

Sitting in the parlor, sitting, sort of lonely as the wight,
Who guesses undreamed dreams of, perhaps, a never coming night;
Sitting, waiting, hesitating, as one, lost in thought, but none
Lying deep, none lying shallow when spry company is gone.

Sitting, clasping mine own hands and thinking, is it truly I?
Who am I? And how am I supposed to sit here till I die?
Is it I, whose feelings foretell something which one loves and fears?
Is it I, whose life is like unto the vapor of my tears?

"Only you," the silence witnessed, "only you" and nothing more,
Whom a God of mercy and of patience, cherished long before.
The bench, on which I was sitting, seemed to urge my heart to prayer,
In the parlor, where my soul swerved on the ladder of despair.

I was sitting, I was standing, in the parlor, and I bowed
There in agony of trying to think, only once aloud.
That I might impart a solace and a thrill of sympathy,
To all mourners, to all dying whom I love, but never see.

"Sorrow not," a spirit whispered, but a spirit of the dead,
Coming from the bookcase corner of the volumes fondly read.
Swiftly he led me to spaces which I had not seen before.
Then departed thro' the keyhole of a modern parlor door.

Oh, what merry vibrations of a still creative breeze,
Floated thro' my soul into the boundless and the brimful seas.
Since I've sinned no more in thinking, that the great before us knew
All in all, and have left nothing for a follower to do.

Looking thro' the shaded window, I was greeted by the dawn
Of a morning, that descended 'pon the flower of a lawn.
And my eyesight caught the rainbow, setting on it like a seal,
As if its assorted colors had a myst'ry to reveal.

There my soul was fully granted, what it hoped for, what it sought,
After a long siege of battles, after mere excusing thought.
And my soul is not despairing, now, and nevermore disguised;
There is only one redeemer, and I love to call him "Christ."

My Fair Maiden

With complexion charming and with hair awave,
She's arrayed. And ample life and light
Fills her peering, brilliant eyes that love and crave
From man a calm regard by right;
And she nips
With her lips
Kisses gladly; and she knows how to restore
Those lost kisses
Which one misses,
When the tempest of all discord ceased to roar.

Notwithstanding, her attractions soar abroad,
As with wings of smile o'er rosy cheeks.
Oh, is she not a masterpiece of God,
And the voice with which she sings and speaks?
It will be
Eternity
Ere we learn the purpose of her charms aright.
And her being,
We are seeing
Move behind the curtain of a waning light.

Oh, the slumber of all slumbers, slumbers deep!
It has tired out mine eyes at last.
They have vainly tried to outdo their sound sleep
And to wait till all the dreams were past.
For there came
Like a flame
Fast and burning, leaping, feet upon the floor,
A fair maiden
Who was laden
With much beauty, which she brought me to adore.

As the visions carve upon a human soul,
Sweet delight, or grief, or both, and fade
Like a vapor aimlessly, without a goal;
So is the mere beauty of a maid.
She descends,
She ascends
To man's heart and calls with magic sound for tho't
Which is pleasing
Without ceasing,
Till the spark of her own desperate love has caught.

Presently, indeed, I know not how to meet
A wise Lord, who hath appointed death,
To tramp upon human love, with his cold feet—
Will it not return again with breath?
Because she
Loves to be
Just like him—with him together on yonder shore,
And be talking
And be walking,
Arm in arm and love forever, evermore.

Stones

All are weeping, all are eye,
Open as the boundless sky,
Never do they live nor die.

They are first to wing thy moans
For all heaven—Oh, the stones,
They put marrow into bones.

How they chatter, spark and jerk
In the ground, where the plows work—
In the dark, where the stones lurk.

Left by every passing day,
In the mud and slum and clay:
Stones will never roll away.

What an anger, what a fret,
Blasteth out of stones, and yet—
There's where many weary sat.

Oh, the rocks within the deep,
How they slash and break and sweep
Back the waves—still how they weep!

Oh, the rock within the sea,
Without birth and destiny:
What a terror—what a lee!

And the rocky mountains there,
What a sure, though stubborn stair,
What a groaning, what a prayer.

Of a terrible God they are,
And their spirit lifteth far,
Up my soul above each star.

On their awe-inspiring chest,
See, the eagle builds his nest,
Coming down to pause and rest.

Nothing finds the eagle's eye
In the boundless blue of sky,
Where to safely build and die.

Rock of ages, let us be
Nowhere founded but on thee:
Safest for Eternity.

The Weeping Stones

Frightened was my innermost,
  By the howling and the shrieking,
  By the growling and the speaking,
And the terror of a ghost.

Sudd'nly came a burning gloat,
  Menacing life's every hour,
  And o'er-mastering all my power,
Stopped the call within my throat.

Those occasions, which would melt
  My heart, beating as with hammers,
  Were now fleeting, for the clamors
Drove them, while I praying knelt.

Child-like hearts, oh, saintly hearts,
  Their desires are the moulding
  Fearful fires, and they're gold'ning
Broken statues, broken parts.

Should there never comfort me
  Any women—never—never—
  With such human, with such clever,—
With a mother's sympathy?

Where are the rippling water brooks
  And the meadows I remember?
  Naught but sorrows, oh, September,
Hast thou pressed upon my looks?

Vainly I put faith and trust
  In the pond'ring, why my spirit,
  Like the body, should inherit
Nothing, but a mould'ring dust.

And in vain I watched the sky
  For a gleaming, for the blessing.
  What seemed all the more distressing
Was, that someone passed me by.

One who's neither wild nor calm.
  And he mumbled, "It is only
  Man who stumbled, who feels lonely,
Who's in need of Gilead's Balm."

But he was a fellow-man,
  Neither waking nor sleeping,
  Neither laughing nor weeping,
And he never passed again.

Oh, the stones broke out in tears
  Of deep sorrow, rolling, clashing;
  Ere the morrow grinding, crashing,
All the fullness of his years.'

Evolution

Where are we from? Where did we get our breath?
Through the ape or other subjects of death?
How in the world and for the love of Sun,
Can I use the ape, my parent, for fun?

How can children walk if their parents jump?
We are the blossom, the ape is the stump;
Where is the stem, brother, come tell us where?
For the branches have no right in the air.

What sin will be laid to our account,
If we leave the monkey in wood and mount,
All to itself, naked and destitute,
And love it e'en less than many a brute?

For the Eternal gave us a command,
To love our parents from beginning to end,
But pardon, evolution has come in
To 'bolish judgment and records of sin.

Hast thou, evolution, us all equipped
With mind and dress but left our parents stripped?
We beg of thee, go back, tho' weakened and lame,
And cover up, at least, our parent's shame.

Or wilt thou have us take measures and rule,
And teach our parents and send them to school?
Go catch the ape when she jumps from the tree
To teach her distant offspring A, B, C.

I do not know how the creative breath
Clings to my lungs and made life out of death.
But if it were given to plant or cell,
Could it not have been given to me as well.

My love and longings and passions of heart,
Hurl back to my childhood days and depart,
For further destinies and far above
All brutes and plants into the sea of love.

No man ever hath known a beast's own tho't.
But men have been learning as they were taught,
The thoughts of God with us—they're peace and rest:
And God is our maker—this is no jest.

The Lion

Scarcely was this wild brute napping
In the jungle, stretching, yapping
'Mid the jungles of a grimly chaos in the "West."
Unaware he uprose, bellowing,
As if he perceived the dwelling
Of some travelers nearby, telling
Aud declaring endless rest.
For in those days hope was blooming within many a mother's breast.

Here he pressed his stiffened being
To the ground, and we were seeing
Clouds of dust and sorrow,
Flying in the air e'er since.
With unusual madness roaring,
With supreme advantage goring,
He attempted the outpouring
Of his anger 'pon the masses,
Starting at the prince;
And the object of his fury is a worthless prince.

No such tyrant ever frightened,
Ne'er such heavy chain has tightened
Living souls down to those horrors and infinite shame.
Ne'er such sea of blood he clotted,
Such legions of lives he glutted,
Since the brain of devils plotted
Ways and weapons of destruction, which no mortal tongue can name.
Who will be found guilty of this horrifying blame?

On tribe unto others linking,
Dying unto dying, sinking;
And depletion whirls bleached faces into a dark deep.
Oh, should I not weep and wonder,
While the unmerciful thunder
Of the desert breaks asunder,
Ties which have been wrought
In Heaven—why should I not mourn and weep?
Can I set my face to laughing
O'er a quivering deep?

Flanders, is thy God in favor
Of thy fate? Went not the Saviour
Stooping o'er, and gently solacing thy dying child,
As a faithful friend and pastor?
But dethroning and disaster
He has sworn to that cruel master,
Who aroused the devastating, slumbering lion, who beguiled
And drove a wedge between them that were reconciled.

Plodding

It is not what we admire
  In the picture gallery,
That determines, shapes entire
  Our life aim's destiny.

It is not the sweet reflections
  Of a fancied distant goal,
Nor the soothing recollections,
  That developeth a soul.

But it is the right beginning
  Of what we are striving for;
Plodding, plodding, slowing winning,
  Are the wings with which we soar.

Stand not where the winds are blowing,
  Thine eyes full with idle sand;
Watch the master paintings growing,
  Underneath a learner's hand.

From the common school of trying,
  Did the great heroic leap;
Came the mighty eagles flying,
  And the swimmers in the deep.

All by obstacles confronted,
  All are of the plodding brand;
Men are needed, men are wanted,
  Who for right and justice stand.

Comparison

Yes, we have some great inventions.
  God hath helped us to attain
Cozy cottages and mansions,
  And we ought not to complain.

When we think of times of olden,
  People had not any less;
Of ornaments gay and golden,
  But no comforts we possess.

Even if the mem'ry travels
  Back but half a century,
There were luxury and revels
  Less than hospitality.

Men of old were strong and ample,
  And it seemed one of their creeds
To live long, however simple,
  And their wants were all their needs.

But, what "up-to-date" engages
  Is less virtue, more that blights:
Flirts and sports and sporting pages,
  And what tickles and excites.

Idle shows and idle rockers
  To dream in, is now-a-days' mark;
And the pews are filled with mockers
  Of the builders of the ark.

That fair type of tender feelings
  Towards our neighbors is erased;
Hence the day of honest dealings,
  Have the greedy well debased.

Well, there is enough imparted
  Of ignoble merriments,
To make people broken-hearted,
  At the altar of events.

Come With Me

Come with me, spake wisdom, sons of man,
And ye daughters of old Mother Eve!
I will lead you safely by the den
Where so many fated weep and grieve.

Lay thine hand in mine and come with me,
While you are tired and so overworn;
And for that happiest Eternity,
I will soothe the heart which now doth mourn.

Come and see the torrent of my tears,
Rolling, oh, so grievously for thee;
Down the fading cheeks of solemn years,
For I know that thou hast need of me.

Tho' I am sick for love, yet I hold
Close watch at the crossing of the way,
Where the whirlwinds, mixed with rain and cold,
Broke the cornerstone in ancient day.

Come with me, all o'er the battlefield
Are diseases flying in the air,
That arise from walking corpse, and yield
Such a pestilential atmosphere.

And the arrows and the fiery darts,
Fly around thine head like swarming bees;
And the serpent thrusts at flighty hearts,
Fangs of poison from forbidden trees.

When I speak the waves and tempests heed,
Haughty principalities are dismayed;
Never have I broken a bruised reed,
Nor left those behind that were afraid.

I will lead you like the ocean's coast
Leads the ebbs and floods as one vast wave;
To the harbor of the ransomed host,
In the realm of rest beyond the grave.

Mingled

Mingled are the breezes with the storms,
  Mingled are the living with the dead,
Mingled are the roses with the thorns,
  Daily sweat with daily peace and bread.

Mingled are the weary with the strong,
  And the unlearned with the wise and keen;
Grief is mingled with the charming song,
  And the withered leaves with cheerful green.

Mingled must some joy with sorrow be,
  And with failures many a success:
Shadows fall from all the lights we see
  And regret from actions of excess.

The School

There's a marvelous erection
  Called "The world," a school so high,
That according to each section,
  People learn to live and die.

Its protecting walls are charted,
  By a heav'n of love and rest;
And its pillars are the parted,
  North and South and East and West.

How it heaves in decorations,
  Of a blue, red, green and white;
And we slight the recitations,
  Of the morn, the noon, the night.

All to school have been admitted,
  To learn prudence, art and wit;
Some are misplaced, some unfitted,
  For the class in which they sit.

Learn of items that are flying
  Nearest to the cloudless sky,
And of blocks which are supplying
  Stairs secure to climb up high.

Let the wind and gentle breezes,
  Flush the hard and tiresome bed
Of a victim of diseases,
  And cool someone's aching head.

That when there comes in some stranger,
  And beholds us thru the day,
May realize the greatest danger,
  To run from our school away.

Let the builder be exalted,
  As the teacher of the school;
Let the one that feels insulted,
  Not despise the "golden rule."

For a hasty word and weakness,
  For the discord of a song,
Do not loose the mind of meekness,
  As schoolmates remember long.

I will patiently acquire
  In my school of life the best,
And when I in death retire,
  I shall understand the rest.

The Mysterious Angel

There's an unseen angel
  Who stands at every gate;
Where all the workers enter,
  And all the duties wait.

He walketh with the lowly,
  With worshipers of pride,
With sinners and with holy
  And followers and guide.

He scattereth thornless roses
  On every liver's path;
And buildeth sweet reposes,
  For hatred, love and wrath.

The girls upon the stages
  Serve not alone for gold;
The lions in the cages
  Make lion-fighters bold.

A mother's inspiration
  Comes from her baby's whine.
Oh, love's anticipation
  O'erwhelm the heart of mine!

And I'll be singing, singing
  At every turn about
With voices that are ringing
  Immortal glory out.

There is no man that knoweth
  From whence this angel came;
A sea of rapture floweth
  From his celestial name.

Yea, even God is wondering,
  "Where is this angel from?
I would myself be blundering
  Without this secret chum."

And music would be mourned,
  Were not this angel there;
And beauty would be scorned,
  And perish eveywhere.

He holdeth all creations
  In perfect harmony
Bestowing strength and patience,
  Upon the Trinity.

He frames a golden portal,
  Out of the common cloud:
"Why should the spirit of mortal,
  Oh, why, should he be proud?"

Thus crime has lost its terror,
  And folly knows no harm,
And truth is stained with error:
  Mysterious angel, charm.

Oh, charm, thou unseen angel,
  Thou ruler of all air;
Thy path leads on through heaven—
  Who will not follow there?

The Restless Member

Far into the distant years
  Grows a tree, an everblooming,
Which but golden apples bears,
  Gently waving and perfuming.

Broken hearts have learned to know,
  That its leaves are healing plasters;
And a rainproof tent bestow
  'Pon the servants and the masters.

Harken to the music thrill
  Of its harps among the branches:
Be it peace and be it still,
  In the home and battle trenches.

Oh, what are these harps of gold,
  And this tree fore'er unbroken?
Tongues they are, tamed and controlled,
  Words of wisdom wisely spoken.

Yonder bleeds a soul to death,
  Hung and stabbed, oh, terrorizing!
Plans, offensive as ill breath,
  Is a member here devising.

Some one whitens golden hair,
  Making short bad stories longer;
Some one leads a flock out there
  Where the lions thirst and hunger.

And with tears I see a wood
  Shamefully laid into ashes;
Trees of beauty that have stood
  And resisted thunder crashes.

Who committed all this wrong?
  Who has dug the wells of weeping?
Alas! it was the untamed tongue,
  While all other ills were sleeping.

Nervousness

May as well be kind and cheering
And maintain a shining brow,
And be patient and forbearing,
For I'm nervous, anyhow.

To refrain from this fair duty
And be ugly and abhore,
Adds not to my strength or beauty,
But makes me nervous all the more.

May's well take my flower basket
And surprise the folks I meet;
For the molding in the casket
Know not the bitter nor the sweet.

May as well still be courageous,
Hide my feelings and suppress;
For there's nothing so contagious
As a person's nervousness.

May as well be cheerful, giving,
Listening to a widow's plea;
Be a friend among the living,
And they will be friends to me.

The Crumbling Mount

There's a mount which bears the traces
  Of a different form each day;
Crumbling fast, like shattered vases,
  With all grace and quaint away.

Years and centuries are shedding,
  From this mount of perilous time;
Aud the fun'ral and the wedding
  Grieve the multitudes who climb.

What a precipice of shudders
  Are those past and bloodstained years,
In our sisters' and our brothers'
  Wrong lived lives and vain wept tears.

Who can comprehend and measure,
  Who can bear another's fate;
And the fire of displeasure
  Of a God supreme and great?

Being certain of the slumber
  In the furrows of the dust,
How can we forget to number
  Our days at any cost?

All are busy picking flowers,
  On the mount and on the heath,
Of the minutes, days and hours,
  For a solemn fun'ral wreath.

I see one on top the mountain
  Darkly, so as thru a glass;
Sitting at the living fountain,
  O'er a downward gazing mass.

Weaving an amazing story
  Down the hollow mountain side,
Such that thrills the young and hoary,
  As they rest or climb or slide.

One whose name is Lord and Master,
Of eternal store and stock,
And whose heart of love beats faster,
With each ticking of the clock.

While the careless world is playing,
Its last music of excess,
He is kneeling still and praying,
On the mount with heaviness.

Move then upward from the hardened
And cracked mountain foot of times,
To be reconciled and pardoned,
Musing in angelic chimes.

Upward, forward be the banner,
At the hour of night or sheen;
As each deed of shame and honor,
Will be on this mountain seen.

For a mountain-trail still pearing,
Many waited with a joke;
With a doubting and a fearing,
Till the layer 'neath them broke;

While the thrifty clutches grasses,
Creeping high'r on hand and knee,
Up to surer paths, and passes
Clouds and thunders, joyfully.

And each noble, true ambition
Rises as the morning's dew,
'Bove the death-pits of suspicion—
There to wait and welcome you.

To My Sweetheart

I believe it does not matter,
Darling sweetheart, brave and true,
If I told you 'bout the letter,
Which I thot of writing you.

Always something that prevented
Me from writing you a rhyme;
Which to write you I intended,
When it yet was mitten-time.

Leaving troubles, they are flying,
Slow and awkward, like a hen;
And the past is only dying,
To become alive again.

Do you, sweetheart, still remember
With what gladness you stepped in,
While the waves of one November
Almost reached my bony chin?

Do you know that you were facing
Undrilled wells of good old wine;
At the solemn time when placing
Your determined hand in mine?

Do you know that you were treading,
Then upon a rocky shore,
Cov'rd with flowers of a wedding?
Think of it and smile once more.

As that shore will be promoted
To a field of pearls for thee;
Who cares so, and toils devoted,
For the babies and for me.

I am asking your revealing,
Of your wishes and your woe;
As the ill and ugly feeling
Will make things look far and slow.

But when I swing sight and hearing,
O'er the billows, dull and sharp;
I see then the skies are clearing,
And I hear an angel's harp.

And a voice speaks there so thrilling,
  You shall wear a brighter crown,
Than the one you laid so willing,
  As the fairest maiden, down.

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